Surára
Pakidái

263
17
[175]

/84 cont./

almost always die within a short time" (401). Reference should

401. Taunay, 1921, p. 166.

also be made to a statement by Roquette-Pinto, in which he says that the Indians of the Serra do Norte reject all salted food (402).

402. Roquette-Pinto, 1919, p. 243.

There are, however, tribes among whom salt is valued to a certain extent. For example, Herbert Baldus reports about a Boróro who complained that he never got enough salt from the mission kitchen. Yet salt was previously unknown to these Indians (403). The Tapirapé and Karajá /Caraja/ also like salt

403. Baldus, 1937, p. 287.

very much (404), whereas among the Tupari only the men like

404. Baldus, 1950, p. 14.

to use it; several women, on the other hand, not at all (405).

405. Caspar, 1953, pp. 133/34.

The following statement by Koch-Grünberg about the Arekuná-Taulipang is noteworthy: "In general, the Indians salt their foods little, but like salt very much and are glad to take it in payment for services rendered" (406).

406. Koch-Grünberg, 1923a, p. 49.

• 272 The number of beverages which are prepared from the nourishing fruit-meat of wild palms is abundant. Especially popular are the biuish acaí and bacaba fruits (see p. 166) about as large as plums, which ripen between December-March. They

/84 cont./

272 are kneaded and pulverized in calabashes filled with water. This produces a grayish-brown, greasy juice which, after the fleshy husks have been fished out and thrown away, reminds one of cacao in appearance and flavor and is extremely filling. This drink tasted even better to me when I added a little sugar. [123] [263] The Indians who tasted this, however, were not enthusiastic about the addition, since they like sugar just as little as salt. I was unable to please either children or adults with my bonbons. The fruit of the bacu buriti, curauá, piaçaba, and ubim palms (see p. 166) is made into beverages in the same way, while that of the inaja palm is cooked beforehand. The juice obtained from this tastes quite insipid, to be sure, but likewise has a high food value.

One should also mention that a drink is prepared from the [114] [184] [197] gathered honey by mixing it with water. I never saw it eaten, as has been confirmed for the Waiká (407) and various /85/ other

407. Zerries, 1956b, p. 150.

tribes of Guiana (408) (409).

408. Koch-Grünberg, 1923a, p. 55.

409. Richard Schomburgk, 1848, II, p. 169.

271 184 As the above account shows, the Surára and Pakidái do not lack variety with regard to beverages, so that only in the rarest instances need they resort to plain water, as is the case, according to Zerries' accounts, among the Waiká (410). As among

273 184 410. Zerries, 1958c, p. 177.

the latter (411), however, alcoholic beverages are completely

411. Zerries, 1958c, p. 177.

unknown to the Surára and Pakidái too.

6: Vinci T-5 (1950) 1959 SQ18 Yanoama SQ18
Sanema

There were often piles of *haimoshi* heaped up underneath trees much too big and too tall for me to have climbed, even had I been dying of hunger. The *haimoshi* is a queer, oval-shaped nut with a long, woody husk enclosed in a compact mass of tiny, needle-sharp spines that resemble the crystals of certain mineral forms of asbestos. It takes some opening, but once open offers man the rich enjoyment of a soft white nut running with a creamy milk.

The consumption of these nuts sets a real problem in logistics and psychology. Transport over any distance is hampered by the exorbitant weight of the shells, a weight which the Indians with their extremely practical minds consider to be out of proportion to the food value of the nut, high though this is. But once the nuts are shelled, there are the piles of gleaming white grains, so attractive that no one can resist them and they are devoured without a thought for the mothers' milk or the strength of the children's blood. Without a doubt, this matter of the *haimoshi* represents one of the outstanding problems of the Samatari provisioning-march and still awaits a satisfactory solution.

VII

The difference in taste between the two races—Shirians and bearded men—comes out most emphatically in their appreciation of the various fruits. There is one particular kind which the Shirians adore—in fact, deify: they will even go to war over the picking of it and those who fall on the battlefield are deemed martyrs and saints.

For the Shirians, Saint Carpoforo lives incarnate in the miraculous, the almost mythical *lakse*; while we, the bearded ones, would sooner identify him with the *sepah*, which is a blend of fig, strawberry and mulberry. The *lakse* grows on the Corozo palm, one of the tallest of the palm trees, which is covered with long and terrible thorns that keep the monkeys far away from its forbidden fruit. Beneath the thorns there is a sweet liquid—palm wine. It can be obtained by lighting a fire at the base of the tree, so that all the juices collect together towards the top of the palm, near the growing part. The tree is then felled, and a little skilful surgery will drain the liquid, which ferments readily. But the Samatari do not indulge in this practice: some deep and ancient wisdom, though they are scarcely conscious of it, has given them the simplest possible commandment about drinking: thou shalt drink only water. Nor does

6: Vinci T-5 (1950) 1959 SQ18 Yanoama SQ18
Sanema

But for all this bad luck, we had one undeniable stroke of good: the weather, extraordinarily enough, remained fine. We were now in April, when the dry season is at its height, but we knew that in these parts 'dry season' is a somewhat theoretical term. In some years, there just isn't one at all, and now that it was supposed to be at its height the rains might burst over our heads at any moment and reduce us to a sorry plight, on these clay hills, with hundreds of streams to cross. In fair weather the forest floor was clean, the air fresh and visibility excellent. Marching was easy, and had an excellent psychological effect.

At the first of the hills, when the track turned aside from the Aracosa banks, we came into a chaos of fallen trees. They stayed with us the whole day, all along the ridge where the path led. Enrico and I were ahead, and at one point we lost the track. Taking our bearings as best we could, we turned back, but found ourselves once more among fallen trees. The havoc must have been caused by a tornado. This is a rare phenomenon, and one we had never encountered in forest country, where the dank and the constant rain keep the atmosphere in a state of equilibrium, which tends to ward off the storm. It must have been the genuinely dry season we were enjoying which had encouraged the hurricane. We were fortunate not to have walked into the middle of it ourselves: with trees being torn up and hurled down we should have been running new and serious risks to life and limb.

For the rest of that day we were trying to find the track, keeping our direction hopefully to the north. But it was late in the afternoon before we saw the Guayca again—thanks to a shot we heard quite close. Great was our relief. The sound of Uarema's gun had raised our hopes, and when at last we caught sight of the Indians from a distance we noticed that they were carrying something wrapped in leaves. But it wasn't game. Uarema had fired at a crane, but missed it. The parcels contained honey which they had found in the tree-trunks blown down by the wind. We gave silent thanks to the storm for strewing honey in our path, as in the old myths, and that night we drank a mixture of honey and water like the warriors of long ago and ate nothing but a handful of *poloinos* gathered on the way. Wild honey, very runny and slightly acid, is sometimes fermented already if it has been stored in the hollow trees for very long. To drink it gives one a certain alcoholic euphoria which with weak, starving men such as we were results in a state of complete prostration. We slept the clock round from dusk to dawn—twelve hours.

222 262 we had each accumulated a half bushel or so, we would then proceed to eat them. In general, it takes a lot of work to get filled up on palm fruits.

The Yanomamö also collect wild honey in considerable quantities. Nothing excites them more than locating a dead tree in which a swarm of bees has built a nest. They will halt everything and, if need be, spend the entire day chopping the tree down [123] to get at the honey. When I began my fieldwork I hired about a dozen men to cut trees for me so that I could build a mud hut. They would be gone all day and return with just a few poles, demanding a full day's pay for their efforts. I decided to accompany them one day to see what they were up to. We spent the entire day wandering through the jungle, eyes glued to the tree tops above. Each time I spotted a suitable tree, they talked me out of cutting it down because "it would rot" or "it is too far away from the river." By mid-afternoon we had not cut a single tree, but had walked over a large area of jungle. Finally, one of the men shouted for the rest of us to come. All the men descended on the large, dead tree he had located, and set about chopping it down with the axes I had provided. It took about an hour to get it down. They then spent another hour chopping holes along the length of the tree trunk to get at the honey inside. When it was exposed, they gleefully tore the combs out, dunked them into the amber liquid, and gorged themselves on the larvae-filled combs. After they had eaten their fill of this, they collected a large pile of leaves and made a crude bowl. Then they stuck handfuls of leaves into the honey and squeezed them out into the leaf bowl. When they had gotten all the honey they could reach, they scoured the nest with leaves and licked them off after each plunge [123] of the hand into the bowels of the trunk. They borrowed the aluminum kettle I had brought along and used to cook our lunch in. As we were some distance from the river [272] and they were impatient, one of them filled the kettle with muddy water he found in a swamp a short distance away. Some of the honey from the bowl was poured into the kettle, along with dead adult bees, twigs, leaves, dirt, and several dozen larvae. They passed this around among themselves, each man drinking about a quart or so of the mead after blowing the debris off the surface in order to expose the water. The remainder [251] of the honey was wrapped up in its leaf bowl, tightly bound with vines, and carried back [123] to the village. On the way back to the canoe we cut a few light trees for my mud hut. They had gotten what they were looking for all day, and I managed to get a few logs. They demanded a full day's pay when we reached home. Thereafter, I paid them by the log rather than by the day.

222 231 262 Finally, several varieties of insects are collected. Perhaps the most desirable food in this category is the grub of an insect that lays its eggs in the decaying pith of dead palm trees. The Yanomamö come very close to practicing "animal domestication" in their techniques of exploiting this food. They deliberately cut the palm tree down in order to provide fodder for the insect. When they cut the tree, they also eat the heart of the palm, a very delicious, crunchy vegetable that slightly resembles the taste of celery hearts. One palm we cut yielded an edible heart of about 50 pounds. After the pith has been allowed to decay for several months, it contains numerous large, fat, white grubs. The pith is dug out of the tree with sticks, broken open by hand, and the grubs extracted. Each grub is bitten behind his squirming head, and the head and intestines removed simply by pulling the body away from the teeth. If a grub gets damaged in the process of extracting it, the parts are eaten raw on the spot. A fair-sized palm tree will yield three or four pounds of grubs, some of them as large as a mouse. The grubs